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ITGA Opens a New Leadership Chapter as Global Growers Gather in Dortmund

International Tobacco Growers' Association concludes its 2026 Annual General Meeting, marking a leadership transition and reinforcing the voice of growers amid market, regulatory and sustainability pressures.

DORTMUND, GERMANY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026 – The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA), the global association representing tobacco grower organizations and providing a collective voice for farming communities in international sector discussions, concluded its 2026 Annual General Meeting at Messe Dortmund, Germany, during InterTabac, bringing together representatives of tobacco-growing communities, grower organizations and sector stakeholders from key producing regions.

The meeting also marked an important leadership transition for the Association, with Marcílio Drescher, President of Afubra, Brazil, confirmed as the newly elected President of ITGA during the Closed Session on 17 September 2026, succeeding José Javier Aranda.

The transition opens a new chapter for ITGA as the Association builds on a year of stronger partnerships, renewed engagement with members, expanded regional coordination and continued work to ensure that tobacco growers' realities are part of discussions affecting the sector.

"ITGA has built a strong legacy over 43 years, and the progress achieved under José Javier Aranda's leadership gives us a solid foundation for the next chapter. We now have an opportunity to build on this momentum by strengthening the voice of growers, improving their economic viability and ensuring the long-term sustainability of tobacco-growing communities around the world," said Marcílio Drescher, newly elected President of ITGA.

During the meeting, ITGA members recognized José Javier Aranda's four-year presidency and his contribution to leaving the Association stronger, more coordinated and better positioned to represent tobacco growers internationally.

His mandate was marked by renewed advocacy engagement, stronger coordination in the Americas, participation in key international regulatory processes, support for the EU Tobacco Products Directive work, continued engagement with African growers and a clear emphasis on ensuring that growers' voices are heard in decisions affecting the sector.

"Each of our members has a responsibility to drive effective advocacy in their own country — advocacy that helps improve growers' incomes and ensures governments better understand the realities and challenges of tobacco growing, so they are better equipped to defend the sector against the continued pressures it faces," said José Javier Aranda, outgoing President of ITGA.

The 2026 Annual General Meeting took place against a backdrop of changing market dynamics, pressure on grower prices, continued regulatory scrutiny and rising expectations around



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sustainability, traceability and living income. ITGA's work in 2026 has highlighted renewed partner engagement, new and reconnected members, stronger cooperation with InterTabac and InterSupply, an Americas Regional Meeting that laid the foundations for stronger coordination among members and a more unified approach to advocacy across the region, continued regional momentum in Africa, and living income research involving more than 700 growers.

Discussions examined the implications of these developments for tobacco growers and producer organizations, with a focus on:

- Market outlook and developments in global leaf production
- Economic sustainability and grower livelihoods
- Regulatory developments affecting tobacco-producing countries
- Traceability, environmental stewardship and due diligence
- Changing demand and global nicotine-consumption trends
- Regional advocacy coordination and the role of grower organizations in international dialogue

“Taken together, the achievements of 2026 so far — stronger partnerships, renewed engagement, new and reconnected members, stronger coordination across the Americas, the successful Africa Regional Meeting and the extensive work to understand growers’ living income — demonstrate that ITGA is moving forward with a stronger and more coordinated voice,” said Mercedes Vázquez, ITGA CEO.

Representatives from key tobacco-producing regions participated in the meeting, including grower organizations and stakeholders from Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, India, Malawi, North Macedonia, the Philippines, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Their participation reflected the diversity of the global tobacco-growing community and the different economic, agricultural and policy contexts in which growers operate.

ITGA emphasized that international discussions affecting tobacco agriculture should be informed by evidence, practical experience and direct engagement with producer organizations.

In his first address as President, Drescher built on the Association’s recent momentum and outlined three broad priorities for the next mandate:

Grower voice and influence: ensuring tobacco growers and their representative organizations have a meaningful voice in discussions and decisions affecting their future.

Economic viability and living income: advancing understanding of growers’ economic realities and supporting the long-term viability of tobacco-growing communities.

Long-term sustainability: helping growers prepare for evolving market, regulatory, sustainability and traceability expectations.



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ITGA will continue working with its member organizations and stakeholders to strengthen growers' representation, support informed dialogue and ensure that tobacco-producing communities have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their future.

"We must take advantage of the momentum we have built and the strong unity across our membership. ITGA's voice is increasingly being heard by governments around the world, and the Association has become an important partner in discussions about the future of tobacco. Now is the time to take this to the next level — to ensure growers have a seat at the table where decisions are made and to strengthen our regional and global coordination so that we can deliver greater benefits for growers," said Marcílio Drescher, newly elected President of ITGA.

The 2026 Annual General Meeting reaffirmed ITGA's role as an international platform for tobacco growers and provided a forum for members to exchange perspectives, assess emerging challenges and define priorities for the Association's next stage.

ENDS

Notes to editors

About ITGA: The International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) is the global association representing tobacco grower organizations and providing a collective voice for farming communities in international sector discussions.

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Editor's note: Follow the designated Events webpage at <https://www.itgaevents.com> and ITGA social media channels — @TobaccoGrowers on X and [itga-tobaccoleaf](https://www.linkedin.com/company/itga-tobaccoleaf) on LinkedIn — for more details about the event.

For more information on InterTabac, visit www.intertabac.de/en/.